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Pregnant Teachers Can't Be Ousted

TRENTON (UPI) — Pregnant school teachers cannot be forced to give up their classes under a new ruling by the State Division of Civil Rights.

The decision made yesterday by James H. Blair, director of the civil rights agency, ruled out a requirement of the Pequannock Board of Education that a teacher must leave school after the fifth month of pregnancy.

Acting on a complaint filed by Mrs. Nancy S. Miller, who was fired by the Pequannock board after her fifth month, Blair decreed that such mandatory pregnancy regulations amount to sex discrimination in violation of state law.

First Ruling

The decision was the civil rights agency's first ruling on pregnancy.

The ruling said the only

way a pregnant teacher can be removed is if her teaching performance has noticeably declined or on a doctor's orders.

If a woman's doctor feels she can continue to teach but the school physician disagrees, then an impartial third physician must be appointed to conduct an examination and make a binding

decision on the woman's ability to continue work, Blair held.

Must Be Rehired

The order also directed the school board to grant teachers leaves of absence without pay and to take them back after the birth of the baby during the same school year. Tenured teachers can return

a year later, if they give advance notice, but boards do not have to take back non-tenured teachers after the year is over.

The order resulted from three days of hearings last November in which the state Association of Boards of Education supported the Pequannock board's position.

Deputy Attorney General David H. Ben-Asher, arguing on behalf of Mrs. Miller, said a policy of forcing pregnant teachers to leave school relied upon un-supported generalizations about women. He said employers should not be allowed to fire women because of their pregnancy alone, without regard to

whether they can still perform their duties.

Back Wages

The Bloomfield and New Milford Boards of Education also were involved in complaints at the November hearing, but they consented to anti-bias orders similar to the one imposed on Pequannock.

The order directs Pequannock to pay Mrs. Miller \$390 in back wages.

The New Jersey Education Association, which represents teachers, hailed the decision and said it has always felt that the matter of maternity leave should be decided between a woman and her doctor without the interference of the school board.

At Prison Hearings

A Veil of Secrecy To Protect Inmates

United Press International

INMATES in New Jersey state prisons, to be called before a special legislative committee on institutions, will be protected by a veil of secrecy to give them privacy and the confidence to speak out about the jails where they are being kept.

"I think we'd get a clear picture of the conditions of prison, of what frightens them most . . . and what they see as most damaging . . . in the system," Assemblywoman Fenwick, R-Somerset, said yesterday.

Mrs. Fenwick, co-sponsor of the committee hearings, said the committee hopes to interview about 12 inmates. A

hearing scheduled last Saturday at Trenton State Prison was cancelled after Rahway prisoners said they would boycott the hearings.

THE INMATES said they wanted to testify at a public hearing in the State House in Trenton.

The request was later turned down by Robert L. Clifford, commissioner of the Department of Institutions and Agencies for security reasons.

The committee has held two public hearings at the State House so far on prisons. The testimony has been aimed at a penal reform package, sponsored by Assemblyman Eldridge Hawkins, D-Essex.

Nun Will Teach Miss. Students

Sister Ann Leo, music teacher at Gloucester Catholic High School in Gloucester City, will join the faculty of the Piney Woods Country Life School, south of Jackson, Miss., this summer.

A former concert pianist, Sister Ann Leo will teach piano, music appreciation and music theory to the impoverished black and Mexican-American children attending the school.

She will leave for Mississippi Friday and return after summer sessions end Aug. 26.

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